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ABSTRACT

The roles and responsibilities of different constituencies in the governance of state colleges and universities are described, based on the position of the American Association of State Colleges and Universities. These constituencies include state legislatures, governing boards, system chancellors, presidents, faculty, middle management, and students. State colleges and universities need to continuously monitor the influences of their mission, and ensure that quality is sustained when adaptations occur. Three major changes experienced by academia since World War II are knowledge explosion, collective bargaining, and financial exigency. State government is responsible for providing adequate funding to enable the college to meet its goals and to insure access, while the governing boards have the ultimate responsibility for the development and operation of the institution. Board policy should clearly specify the role and status of the executive officer and the officer's relationship to the campus presidents. The college president's responsibilities include implementing existing board policies and recommending personnel matters and new policies to the board. The roles of faculty, administrators, and students are also addressed. (SW)

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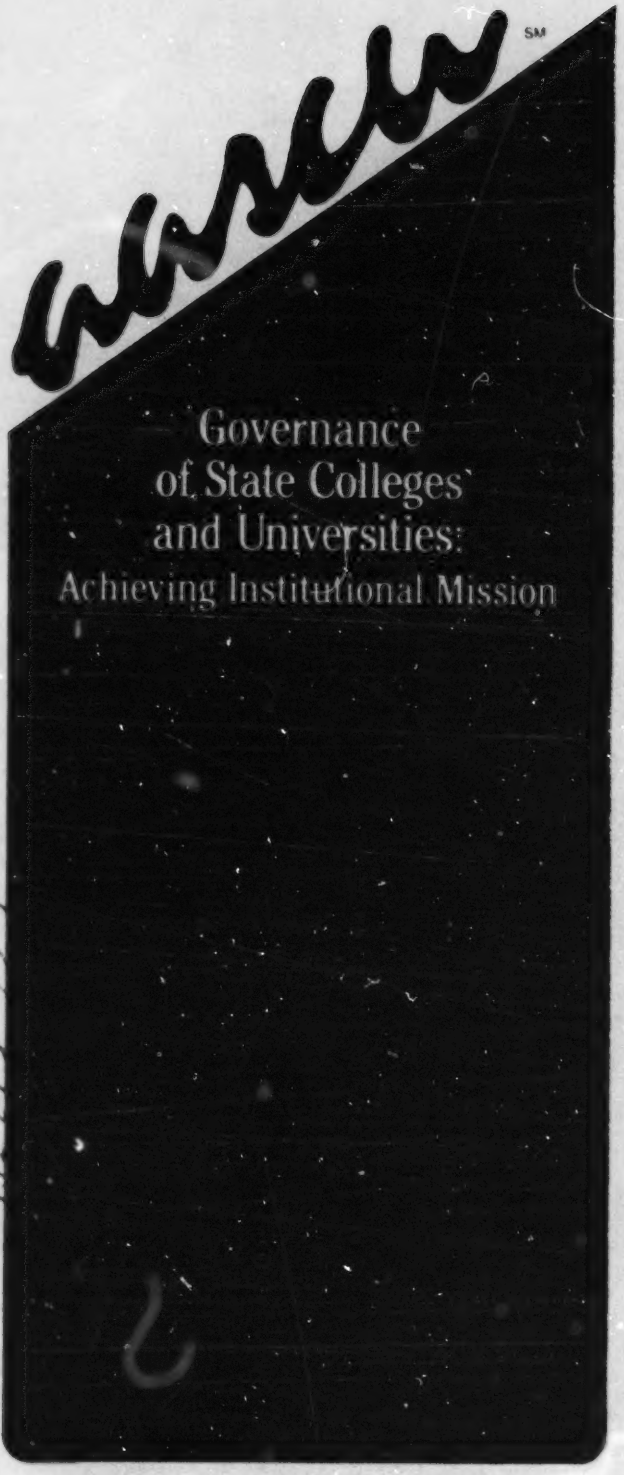

GOVERNANCE OF STATE COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES: Achieving Institutional Mission

The following statement was developed by the AASCU Committee on Governance and approved by the membership on November 19, 1984.

Introduction

A well-defined mission provides each college and university with its own distinctive identity, guiding the development of programs, attracting committed faculty, and ensuring that students and the community are served effectively. Institutional welfare depends upon the preservation and continuing development of a valid mission.

Colleges and universities use governance, a process of decision making, as the primary means of guiding themselves toward the achievement of their institutional mission. A concept unique to higher education, it requires each constituency associated with a college or university to subordinate its own interests to the greater purpose of helping the institution to achieve its mission.

The American Association of State Colleges and Universities (AASCU) believes that the governance process provides essential assistance in enabling institutions to resolve the multitude of complex academic and administrative issues which confront them continuously. AASCU institutions encourage the contributions of their several constituencies, each of which brings to bear special knowledge and a unique perspective of governance issues. The informed views of each constituency help to strengthen and protect the institution's mission.

This statement describes the roles and responsibilities different constituencies have when they participate in academic governance. In the public sector, these constituencies include state legislatures, governing boards, system chancellors, presidents, faculty, middle management classified employees, and students. Each constituency has a legitimate interest in the institution's success and can be most effective when it uses its expertise in the service of institutional goals.

Developing the Mission of State Colleges and Universities

For the last one hundred years, America's state colleges and universities individually and collectively have been devoted to the belief that citizens must have the opportunity for postsecondary education of the highest quality in the fields of their choice. This nation needs such well-educated citizens if it is to maintain and enhance its ethical, cultural, and social values. Further, economic development, urban renewal, rural enhancement, efficient energy production and use, technological superiority, and improved quality of life for all require an educated and trained population. This overall mission continues to guide current efforts and planning for the future in AASCU institutions.

Institutional mission, however, is not a static concept. Adaptation and change occur on campus and in a college or university's mission in response to new demands for education and to a changing social, economic, and political context. Consequently, state colleges and universities must continuously monitor the factors that affect their mission, and ensure that quality is sustained when adaptations occur.

A Changing Context

While colleges and universities have experienced many changes since World War II, three in particular are of continuing major importance to the academic community.

The Knowledge Explosion. Scientific and technological knowledge has grown at an exponential rate since World War II. New fields of study have been created out of older disciplines, and entirely new areas of knowledge have developed. Rapid and continuing social and economic change has also given rise to new subject areas. In keeping with their institutional missions, AASCU institutions must be dynamically aware of these developing fields of learning and should accommodate their programs to them when it is appropriate and feasible to do so.

Collective Bargaining. The context for shared governance has changed on those campuses where faculty have organ-

ized to bargain collectively. Legally, both administration and faculty must abide by the conditions of the collective bargaining agreement. To the degree that a faculty union is given exclusive authority under an agreement to deal with specific matters related to institutional governance, these same matters cannot also be the responsibility of the faculty as a whole or a faculty senate. On the other hand, where there is no collective bargaining agreement, governing board policy and institutional rules should guide the governance process toward enlightened and constructive ends.

Financial Exigency. During the next 20 years, many institutions will have to operate under conditions of severe financial constraint because of mandated budget cuts and declining enrollments. The result may well be "financial exigency," a condition under which reduced financial resources threaten to impair an institution's ability to provide high educational quality and individual opportunity. While an institution should not view financial exigency as a catastrophic event, it must recognize that when it is in that state, it will have to redefine some of its programs and reallocate resources to insure that its essential mission remains intact. The enhancement of the quality of education rather than mere survival must be everyone's shared goal.

Participating in Governance

Institutions of higher learning must conduct their affairs in an atmosphere of openness and respect on the part of everyone concerned with the process. Each governance constituency must have a sense of equity in the institution and an understanding of the interdependence of its own welfare with the health and vitality of the institution. This sense of equity comes through good communication and appropriate participation in dealing with significant issues. Based on that premise, this section describes the roles and responsibilities of each constituent group in the governance process.

State Government. Public higher education falls under the purview of *both* the executive and legislative branches of state government. State government is responsible for providing adequate funding to give institutions a fair opportunity to meet their institutional goals and for insuring that access to higher education is being provided for its citizens and that their educational needs are being met. State government fosters a climate for effective decision-making on campus when it acts in an orderly and timely fashion, particularly in the appropriations process.

Governing Board. Although governing boards generally have specific limitations placed on their power, they have the ultimate responsibility for the development and operation of the institutions under their authority. Their single most important duty is the selection, support, and evaluation of the president. In addition, they must preserve and protect the integrity and academic freedom of their institutions and shield them from political intervention. They must also do everything they can to make certain that their institutions are appropriately funded.

System Executive. Most public universities are organized into multicampus systems in which a single governing board has jurisdiction over several institutions. It is essential in such cases that board policy specify clearly the role and status of its executive officer and his or her relationship to the campus presidents. If the presidents report to a system chancellor, rather than directly to the board, the chancellor, in the exercise of his or her delegated authority from the board, is responsible for promoting academic integrity and appropriate institutional autonomy. The chancellor usually has ultimate administrative authority for all campuses within the jurisdiction of his or her board.

The chancellor should have a broad vision of the system's role in meeting the higher education needs of the state, and should encourage each component institution to develop and achieve its mission with appropriate independence. The chancellor should recommend policy to the board and work with the presidents collegially in implementing board policy.

President. As chief executive officer, the president has the delegated responsibility for implementing existing board policies and for recommending personnel matters and new policies to the board either directly or through a system executive. In addition, the president should create and maintain a strong vision and a sense of com-

mon institutional direction and self-esteem. The president's primary responsibility is to administer the institution in so constructive a fashion as to enhance the possibility that it will achieve its total mission, including education, research, and service, in accordance with state and federal laws, and the policies of the governing board, and within the resources made available to the institution.

Faculty. Faculty are charged with fulfilling the promise of the institution through their teaching, research, and community service. In the governance process, faculty, guided by the directives of the board of trustees and the president, have the primary responsibility for such fundamental areas as curriculum, methods of instruction, degree standards*, research, and those aspects of student life which relate to the educational process.

Even on campuses where collective bargaining may preclude their direct participation, faculty offer the administration advice and guidance on institutional matters. Unless specified otherwise in state law, board policy, or institutional by-laws, the faculty role is advisory only. However, faculty cooperation in campus decision making is essential to the success of the institution's activities.

Effective participation depends on having faculty make their views known in a timely fashion. While thoughtful debate is an important part of the decision-making process, it must ultimately lead to recommendations on a course of action.

Senior Administrators, Middle Management, and Classified Employees. Approximately sixty percent of university personnel are senior administrators, middle management, and classified employees. Their participation in decision-making is part of an effective governance process, and their views should be taken into account when they have expertise to contribute to the decision-making process or when a decision will affect their employment.

Furthermore, when these employees are state civil servants or members of a union, they should be consulted at the very least in order to ensure that decisions being made are not contrary to state policy or to a collective bargaining agreement.

Students. Students, who ultimately have the greatest stake in the implementation of their institution's mission, should be encouraged to contribute to campus governance. Students have a delegated role in governance. In some states, students sit on governing boards and participate in university senates. On most campuses, there are student representatives on institutional committees, and in many colleges, students have some responsibility for campus life and student government, guided by administrative and faculty oversight.

Given their investment in their institution, and the positions of influence they have assumed, students have corresponding responsibilities to their institution. When they participate in governance, they need to know and strive to achieve the long-term goals of their institution. As is true with other participants in campus governance, fiscal responsibility and academic integrity must be the hallmarks of their advice and decisions.

Fostering Education

State colleges and universities strive to provide both liberal educations and academic training in a variety of disciplines to their students. Institutional success is measured qualitatively, by the productive lives of the graduates and by their contributions to society. Governance has an essential role to play in promoting that outcome, for it helps to foster a climate in which educational goals are emphasized. Furthermore, it is important for the entire educational community to participate in and understand that short and long-range decisions are made to achieve the institution's mission. Governance is not an end in itself, but an important means for ensuring quality in education.

*AASCU agrees with the American Association of University Professors' 1973 "Statement on Government of Colleges and Universities" that, "The faculty sets the requirements for the degrees offered in course [sic], determines when the requirements have been met, and authorizes the president and board to grant the degrees thus achieved."

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